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[title page]

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THE ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF RETH KUR WAD FAFITI OF THE SHILLUK

By P. P. Howell

With an account of the final ceremonies by J. O. Udal

IN a previous article[1] I described the death and burial of *reth* Dak *wad* Fadiet who was installed at Fashoda in January, 1946 and died in Malakal in May 1951. I explained that the events and ceremonies which took place would be treated separately, but that the death of one *reth* and the installation of his successor is all one process in which the soul of Nyikang, the founder of the Shilluk dynasty, passes from the old to the new. The period of the interregnum is full of dangers for the Shilluk people: *piny bugon*, "there is no land," the Shilluk say. The prosperity of the people is dependent on the position in society of the *reth*: he is the symbol of unity and national order and is further responsible for the control of natural phenomena for the benefit of his subjects. Such divine attributes are not automatically acquired by the newly appointed *reth*: he can only acquire them by careful observance of all the rites and ceremonies necessary to assure the transfer and to confirm him in his position. Each stage in these ceremonies is therefore another crisis passed both for the *reth* himself and for his people. It is a further step towards the re-establishment of former stability and only when he has been finally installed at Fashoda is there a return to normal. This state of affairs is manifest at every point of the proceedings which throughout so vividly display these concepts.

The events may be divided as follows:

(i) The death and "lying in state" of the late *reth* during the period, often several months, when his body lies in a hut in a village specially prepared for the purpose.

(ii) The election of his successor.

(iii) The actual burial of the late *reth's* remains in the village of his birth or adoption and the final mourning ceremonies called in Shilluk *nomo*.

(iv) The ceremonies which culminate in the actual installation of the new *reth* in the Shilluk capital of Fashoda.

These events have been described in some detail in the case of Fafiti *wad* Yor who was installed in 1917 and died in 1943, in the case of Anei *wad* Kur who succeeded him and who died in 1945 and of Dak *wad* Fadiet who succeeded Anei and died in 1951.[2]

[1] *The death and burial of Dak wad Fadiet*, S.N.R. Vol. 33 Part 1.

[2] Munro, P., *Installation of the Reth of the Col.*, S.N.R. Vol. 1. 1918. Howell, P. P. & Thomson, W. P. G., *The death of a Shilluk Reth and the installation of his successor*, S.N.R. Vol. 27. 1946, and Thomson, W. P. G., *Notes on the death of a Reth of the Shilluk*, S.N.R. Vol. 29. 1948.

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643 I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of these accounts, for the observations which are recorded here are not part of a full and detailed description, but of a note intended to amplify previous records.

643 776 Although the spirit of Nyikang may appear almost anywhere in Shilluk country and in the numerous shrines which are found there, I think it is safe to assume that, where the new *reth* is concerned, Nyikang disappears at the time of the actual burial of the late *reth*. His spirit appears again in the effigy [178] which is kept at Akurwa, the most important shrine in the country, and remains there pending the final ceremonies of the installation. Until the obsequies [177] of his predecessor are completed, the *reth*-elect is not finally accepted, though [169] he must follow the rules laid down by tradition and must avoid pollution. Theoretically, though this no longer holds true with the administration of the present government, his position may at any time be challenged by a rival and civil war might follow. After the old *reth* has been buried, though the danger [175] from rivals is always present, he has to face the spirit of Nyikang and to undergo the trials to which Nyikang will subject him before he is accepted as a worthy successor and is himself possessed by the spirit. Actual physical 643 danger from other claimants, the danger of an uprising against him, which is never entirely absent throughout his reign, is at its peak, but wanes as each stage is successfully passed. All this is expressed by the conventional attitudes displayed by him and his people and in the ordeals he must undergo. Thus, though there may be no real danger of armed conflict, the situation demands that these conventions be followed and throughout there is an atmosphere of insecurity.

We are here concerned with the election and installation of Kur *wad* Fafiti. As the son of a *reth* who ruled the Shilluk for so long and so successfully[1] and coming immediately after two *reths* whose reigns were short and by no means universally popular, Kur was a likely candidate and it was generally accepted that one of the house of Fafiti was the obvious choice. The Electoral College of chiefs sat at Fashoda immediately after the body of Dak *wad* Fadiet [175] had been immured in the hut at Debwor. Mr. J. L. Baker, who was present, describes the procedure as follows:

"On the 13th May, 1951, the Electoral College sat without further delay as the chiefs wanted a new *reth* quickly owing to the approach of the rains. Also the issue was pretty clear from the outset as, apart from one or two chiefs in Golbainy, the Shilluk were solidly in favour of *nyireth* Kur—a man known to me as a very well-behaved and dignified type, from Bapi behind Kodok. The College on this occasion was ten strong (no Tonga people had arrived, but this was not considered important). The following sat:

1. *jago* Yorkeiker (Gol Dhiang)
2. *jago* Thabo (Gol Nyikang)
3. *kwanyireth* Cayo (*jang kwareth*)[2]

[113]

[1] There were occasional conspiracies against Fafiti, notably that of Nyaweilo *wad* Kur in 1932. See Pumphrey, M. E. C., *The Shilluk Tribe*, S.N.R. Vol. 24 p. 5.

[2] *jago jang kwareth*, lit. "the chief of the chiefs of the *kwareth*." The title was apparently given to this branch of the royal house by *reth* Nyakwac.

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4. *jago* Aturwel (Fadit Division)
5. *kwanyireth* Akwei (Detwok Division)
6. *jago* Ongwany (Muomo Division)
7. *jago* Olwak (Fanyidwai Division)
8. *kwanyireth* Dhikwan (Nyijok Division)
9. *kwanyireth* Yomon (Lul Division)
10. *kwanyireth* Geny (Malakai Division)[4]

I informed them of three candidates who on various grounds were unacceptable to the Government and left them. On the night of the 13th matters were hastened because *nyireth* Kur was summoned by the Electoral College and marched with his followers to Akwabai to await daylight and formal acceptance. I arrived at 7.30 a.m. on the morning of the 14th and found the new *reth* already in Fashoda which he had entered after stepping over a sheep tethered to the ground[5]. I waited for two hours while certain rituals (*kwer*) was performed, including the making of new fire by rubbing fire-sticks together (*pic mac*), water boiled over the fire and used for the shaving of the *reth's* head. The chiefs—a very large cross-section of Shilluk society, for only *kwanyireth* Deng of Apac, and the chiefs of Tonga and Fanyikang had not arrived—together with the men of Kodok and others present shouted their allegiance and a black ox (no entire animal could be found) was speared, stood looking dazed for about five minutes and then fell on its left side (a good omen) just by the royal cattle byre. The chiefs dispersed on the 15th, leaving the *reth* to contemplate for a few days in his father's home, while Fashoda was being organised to house a new *reth* after being deserted for several weeks owing to *reth* Dak's absence in hospital."

Mr. Baker has also remarked that in the list of chiefs given above, only the first three are essential at this meeting. "The others are truly only witnesses or at most proposers of candidates." Thomson, speaking of the election of *reth* Dak, says "it was clearer to me than before that the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang[7]." "I doubt whether even the chief of the *kwareth* (*jago jang kwareth*) has any influence: he and the other members of the College have only to listen to a decision."[8]

I had not the time to attend all the events or to investigate all the aspects of the preparations which led up to the installation on this occasion. Mr. Thomson and I between us had been able to cover much of the ground on the accession of *reth* Anei. Mr. Thomson was able to add further details on the installation of *reth* Dak. It must be remembered, however, that the death of one *reth* and the installation of another takes not less than a year to complete and that the ceremonies are set over a wide field from one end of Shilluk

[4] See Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 31-33.

[5] The significance of this act (*ahodh*) is discussed in a pervious article: S.N.R. Vol. 33 Part I.

[7] Howell & Thomson, *ibid*, p. 75.

[8] Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 152.

123 country to the other, a distance of about one hundred and sixty miles. Here, with the help of Mr. J. L. Baker and Mr. J. O. Udal, I can only supplement 643 our previous accounts by recording actual observations made on this occasion with additional information from Shilluk who attended. Mr. Baker was unfortunately transferred to another district a few days before the final ceremonies.

Before describing the events as they occurred on this occasion, it will be as well to summarise the main features of the ceremonies according to traditional practice. In the installations of the various Shilluk *reths* of which we have records there has been no great deviation from the general principles and what differences are found concern the actual timing and minor alterations in ritual.

The rôle of Nyikang

643 We have already seen that when the soul of Nyikang has finally left the person 776 of the late *reth*, he appears in effigy at Akurwa. This effigy, together with that of Dak, 778 son of Nyikang, made of bamboo and ambatch surmounted by huge plumes of ostrich feathers[a], sometimes appear in public during the lifetime of a *reth*: normally they are dormant and their principal functions are concerned with the installation ceremonies. Nyikang is everywhere, but for the moment his personality is concentrated in this effigy. To the Shilluk the effigy is Nyikang, so that in all our accounts we have always spoken of Nyikang meaning both the effigy and the spirit: the two are indistinguishable. [781] Throughout the ceremonies the effigies are treated by the Shilluk with a mixture of hilarity and dread; mixed emotions which are always apparent. When all the preparations have been completed, Nyikang and Dak are carried forth from the shrine at Akurwa and beat the bounds of Shilluk country to the north. They are carried by [64] men of the *kwe* Nyikwom and surrounded by a bodyguard of the same clan armed with whips to clear the people from their path. They then march southwards on Fashoda.

The flight of the reth to Debalo

643 As soon as the *reth* hears that Nyikang draws near, he abandons the capital and [63] retreats to the village of Debalo a few miles south of Arepejur, the watercourse which is the boundary between the two ceremonial divisions of Shilluk country, Gol Dhiang (the north) and Gol Nyikang (the south). These divisions are of great importance in the installation ceremonies and on other occasions have no real significance. The *reth* is always supported in the conventional hostilities which follow by the occupants of Gol Nyikang, and Nyikang, in his march from Akurwa to Fashoda is supported by Gol Dhiang; *gol*, literally "homestead," and a word used to describe the smallest domestic unit of Shilluk society, here merely means "home" or "country of." The origin of these two divisions is historical and the names themselves have no direct connection with the conventional opposition displayed during the installation. The two ceremonial divisions do not correspond exactly (though nearly) with similar divisions, Gerr and Lauk, which have a periodic significance in quite another context[b]. At Debalo, the *reth* remains in strict seclusion for three days, guarded by day and night, and the village is not open to anyone who is not a personal attendant or from the divisions of Gol Nyikang. The belief that he is in danger is expressed in a number of ways, including the lighting of fires all round the village at night and the fact that although a special house is built and most carefully decorated in the royal manner to receive him, he actually sleeps in one of the more dilapidated and less conspicuous houses.

[a] See Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 159.

[b] Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 75 (I).

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The march of the armies and the mock battle

After three nights in seclusion in Debalo, during which his followers are mustering from the south, the *reth* is challenged by Nyikang to come forth to fight and messengers are sent for this purpose. Accompanied by *Nyakwer*, "the girl of the ceremonies," who plays an important part in subsequent events, by various relics of Nyikang, by his shield and spear-bearers and his army, the *reth* marches on the capital, crossing Arepejur on the way, and attacks the army of Nyikang by then drawn up just west of Fashoda. In this battle he is defeated, captured by Nyikang and carried off to the shrine of Nyikang (*Cerfue*) nearby. 643

The substitution on the sacred stool

In front of this shrine the sacred stool of Shilluk kings, the *kwom*, is set shrouded from the public by a canopy of white cloth. Nyikang is placed upon this, but after a time is whisked away and the *reth* takes his place. This act of substitution and enthronement, perhaps the most significant act of all the ceremonies, is the point where the *reth* is possessed by the spirit of Nyikang. [778 775]

The temporary camp

Shortly after this the *reth* is carried to a temporary camp (*Adul*), where, after a sacrifice, he is washed and purified. He remains there in strict seclusion, guarded by the *ororo*. [783 644]

The vigil in Athurwic

On the next evening, he ascends into *Athurwic*",† the imposing mound which dominates the capital and on which are four well-built houses. It is said that he is enticed there by a woman of the *ororo*, leaving *Nyakwer* behind, forgotten and neglected. After two nights, word is brought to him that Nyikang has seized her on the grounds that she has been married with cattle from the royal herd: these are his, Nyikang's property, not that of a man who has not yet been confirmed in his position as *reth*.

The final struggle with Nyikang

Challenged, the *reth* comes down from the mound with his followers, while Nyikang moves forward to attack him right in the centre of Fashoda. In a furious battle which follows, the *reth* succeeds in wresting *Nyakwer* from Nyikang and retires into *Athurwic* once more. Shortly afterwards, Nyikang ascends the mound and makes his peace with the *reth* and there follows a ceremonial inspection of the houses of the capital and fines are imposed on those clans who have not fulfilled their obligation to repair them. The *reth* has now been accepted by Nyikang whose official and public functions are over. Later he retires again to Akurwa. [614 651]

Speech Day

On the final day, the chiefs of the country assemble below the mound and the *reth*, accompanied by his drummer and shield-bearer, comes down to meet them. Each chief in turn addresses the *reth* and, after declaring his allegiance, exhort him to do his duty and to treat his people justly. The *reth* is then conducted again round the houses of Fashoda over which he now has complete control. 631 643

In this brief summary, I have drawn attention only to the most important features of the installation. There is naturally a wealth of ritual carried out at each stage of the ceremonies. From the accounts of the accession of *reth* Fafiti in 1917, *reth* Anei in 1944 and *reth* Dak in 1946, we have a clear picture of the slow and colourful process by which a *reth* is chosen and installed. Each stage has its religious and secular aspects and in the short description of the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti which follows, it will be 643

† Variously spelt: *Atwrwic*, *Athudowic*, *Athurwic*.

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643 seen that in general all these essential stages were faithfully fulfilled, though there was some variation in detail.

The Installation of Reth Kur wad Fafiti

Preparations for the installation began almost as soon as the late *reth* was laid in the hut at Debwor and reached a crescendo of activity towards the end of the year. One of the most important ceremonies is the expedition to *podhe manyo* which lies to the north of the present Shilluk boundaries. [173] According to tradition, this region was originally occupied by *reth* Dak, son of Nyikang, or at least regarded as legitimate raiding country, which in fact *podhe manyo* means. Mr. J. L. Baker has added to our information on this subject[1] and writes as follows:

"One of the major ceremonies (*kwer*) prior to the installation does not appear to have been recorded. I was not able to attend myself, but I am creditably informed that this is what happens.

"On the return of the men of Akwabai from *podhe manyo*, having brought silver wristlets and a number of rings (*gwel*) such as are normally worn by important Shilluk on the first knuckle of each finger, they visit Abworo and then Fashoda. Here the *reth* calls the *bung* Nyikango (leaves of Nyikang) and orders them to take this silver to the shrine of Ak[illegible] where it remains. I suggest that represents the spoils of victory of [illegible] raiding party.

[178] "Then the effigy of Dak (the old one) is taken to Nyikang's island to find Nyikang. He is carried in a Shilluk canoe by the *kwa* Nyikwom and accompanied by the men of Moro whose job it is to dive for Nyikang when the time comes. When they arrive at the island, which is just north of Geiger,[2] the small drum (that of Nyikang) is beaten near the bank of the river and Dak watches the water. A white bird (no special kind) should appear to show that Nyikang is near.

643 776 778 "The diver then picks up the *jum* Nyikango (offerings for Nyikang) and searches for Nyikang under the water. If Nyikang is pleased to accompany the party, he comes out of the water and, having accepted the offerings, is wrapped in cloth and taken to Akurwa, escorted by Dak and the *kwa* Nyikwom. At Akurwa, it is for him to give his agreement to the proposed *reth* as candidate for the installation. The stage is now set and all that remains is the collection of hippo-hide whips (*angero*) for the *kwa* Nyikwom, which must be prepared for them, and the making of the new effigy of Nyikang. Without these preliminaries and the consent of Nyikang, signified by his presence, the installation could not take place."

By mid-January, 1952, these preparations and those which concern the *reth* were nearing completion. The installation was due to take place. There were, however, the usual and inevitable delays and it was not until towards the end of that month that Nyikang and Dak, represented in the effigies, came

[1] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 37.

[2] On the east bank and well north of the present boundaries of Shilluk country.

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forth from the shrine and marched northwards to beat the bounds of Shilluk country in Muomo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller gifts from the occupants of the villages through which they pass. This licensed plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwa* Nyikwom. It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Moro, however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the party for a while.* They had left Akurwa on the 28th January and reached Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance with custom, the *reth* fled to Debalo.

As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in Debalo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fafiti, had spent no more. Fafiti's break with tradition had been dictated by the fear that he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and Fafiti had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum.† Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate successor.‡ This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of those *reths* of the Shilluk of which records exist.

Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debalo had two main effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this

* It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

† Mr. Udal writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debalo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwa* Nyikwom and said he would follow the precedent of his father and sleep only one night at Debalo. Accordingly, after news of Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti set out before sunrise for Debalo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the battle should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established custom if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

‡ For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

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Nyikang and Dak advance to meet the Reth's forces.

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At Debalo. The Reth Steps over a bull before his departure.

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purpose. Secondly, it was clear that many persons from the southern Shilluk assumed that he would remain there for at least three nights before proceeding to Fashoda and were therefore too late to attend the ceremonies.

I reached Kwom, near Debalo, on the morning of the 6th February. At that early hour there was little activity, though many of the *reth's* followers were to be seen clustered round Debalo. There followed the usual delay while *kwa* Ojul, the clan whose duty it is to provide a heifer which is led backwards in front of the *reth* as he leaves for Fashoda," were still arguing about the number of spears and other articles they should receive as their reward; *kwa* Okelo who provide *Nyakwer*, the " girl of the ceremonies," who accompanies the *reth* and plays such an important part in the installation, were also late. Finally, towards midday, all was ready. Messengers had arrived to say that Nyikang was on the move, and after stepping over the bull and the performance of the usual ritual associated with this occasion, the *reth* and his company set out for Fashoda. I watched the procession depart and as far as I could make out the formation of the bodyguard and the position of the clans was the same as in 1944, though a great deal less orderly in the initial stages of the journey. Since Mr. J. C. N. Donald (who had attended the installation of *reth* Anei and of *reth* Dak) and Mr. Udal were present, I decided to leave the *reth's* party and to motor northwards to follow the army of Nyikang. Mr. Udal has recorded the details of the *reth's* march as follows:

" In fact it was not until nearly 12.30 p.m. that the procession finally set off to meet the forces of Nyikang. The *reth* appeared wearing a Mrs. Gray antelope skin surrounded by his family entourage including *Nyakwer*, her luggage carried on a retainer's head and the shield-bearer carrying the small shield of Nyikang wrapped in white cloth. In addition to his own police in their scarlet *laus*, the *reth* on his own initiative had arranged that the two Government police, stationed at Debalo for the occasion, should escort him and they accompanied him throughout the ceremonies. A bull was efficiently cast for the *reth* to step over and with that the procession moved off at a brisk pace. There was no stop for refreshments at the merchant's shop at Kwom which had been honoured by *reth* Anei on his way to the installation in 1944. Not until the *khor* Arepejur was reached did the cavalcade, deployed in extended line, come to a halt.

" The time was now about 1 p.m. On the northern bank of the watercourse the forces of Nyikang could be seen drawn up in wide formation and the effigies stood out distinctly at some quarter of a mile's distance. Two messengers from Nyikang were waiting in the bed of the watercourse, and the black bull, over which the *reth* must step, was also in evidence. A brief conversation was held with Nyikang's messengers who then returned to their master. In the meantime singularly inadequate attempts were made to cast the black bull, which delayed the proceedings by eluding its captors and running away down *Khor* Arepejur, from which it was only retrieved with difficulty. Finally it was well and truly cast, and the *reth's* forces crossed the watercourse with much shouting and advanced to meet the forces of Nyikang."

[11] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-53.

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Opposite Fashoda. The *kwa* Nyikwom lead Nyikang and Dak in their advance against the Reth.

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The substitution on the stool. Nyikang has withdawn and stands on the right. The Reth is still seated on the stool underneath Nyikang's spear (wrapped in white cloth) on the left.

Photograph: J. C. N. Donald

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In the meantime, I had driven along the road until, about two miles north of Fashoda, I met Nyikang, Dak and their followers moving at great speed towards the capital. I followed them for a while and then took up a good position immediately west of Fashoda in the open grass where I knew the opposing forces would meet. Nyikang soon arrived and halted, drums beating and the shield-bearer dancing forward in defiance of the *reth* and his army who were by then appearing over the crest of the northern bank of Arepejur. The *kwa* Nyikwom, armed with whips, then dashed forward and those armed with millet stalks met in a disorderly and not very spectacular clash well to the west of the main party. Then, as the *reth* and his personal guards drew near, Nyikang and Dak rushed up to him, surrounded him and bore him off towards Fashoda, while a furious battle took place between the opposing forces, the *kwa* Nyikwom lashing out with their whips without mercy.

Outside the shrine, which had been beautifully cleaned and decorated for the occasion, the royal stool (*kwom*), wrapped in white cloth, was ready. As Nyikang and his captive drew near, the white canopy was thrown around them. It was therefore not easy to see what happened, and it would have been unseemly to push behind the screen, but it was clear that the substitution had taken place a few minutes later when Nyikang withdrew into the shrine.

A short time afterwards, the *reth's* feet were bathed and he was carried to the temporary camp opposite. He emerged again almost immediately to make passes over the bull, covered in white cloth and a leopard-skin, with the traditional weapons handed to him for the purpose, and then entered *Adul* once more, while the beast was sacrificed, falling on its side about fifty yards away. The man responsible for spearing it" was seen running rapidly towards the river where he must wash the blood from the blade and purify himself in the water. A fire was then lit inside one of the two small huts in the camp and water was heated in which the *reth* was bathed."

This ended the first day of the installation. The *reth* was safely in seclusion within *Adul*, and although not free from danger yet, had successfully passed one of the most dangerous periods of the whole procedure. The only other ceremony performed that day was the lighting of fire outside the camp

" From the *kwa* Nyiboc of Limo.

" In conversation with Shilluk after the event, I was informed that during his stay at *Adul*, the temporary camp, the *reth* is expected to have sexual intercourse with one of his half-sisters. The custom (*kwong*) is said to derive from Dak, who, infuriated by Nyikang's action in giving his mother, Akec, to Cal (or Burro, another brother), took one of his half-sisters who eventually gave birth to Ocolo. Nyikang was apparently outraged by this action, but decreed that thereafter every *reth* should take one of his half-sisters. This story is recorded by Hofmayr (see Bibliography), but I had not realised that the act—a ritual breach of the rules of exogamy and called *ahwalo*—actually takes place. It is also said that members of the *kwareth* have to do likewise when they are appointed chiefs (*jago*) though it is admitted that the woman is usually a more remote kinswoman than a half-sister. The act is none the less one of incest. The matter needs further investigation.

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643 by the *ororo* and *kwareth* of Fashoda, a ceremony which I did not attend, though I had seen it done at the installation of *reth* Anei.

If there are any observations to be made on this day's events, they are that the whole occasion was carried out in a much less serious manner than previously. The participants appeared to be light-hearted and the dangers to the *reth*, though carefully stressed, were obviously not taken so seriously. If there is any explanation of this, it is probably that the Shilluk, who have undergone the very real strain of no less than three installations in the last seven years, are now used to these events and do not regard them with such awe as before. It is also possible that Kur, as the son of a successful and popular father, was a candidate accepted with a greater degree of unanimity and calm than either of his two immediate predecessors. The number of participants seemed much less than before, possibly for the reasons already given, and because many people from the south were barred from coming [164 744] owing to cerebro-spinal meningitis. One had the impression that the number of Nyikang's followers was much greater than those of the *reth*, no doubt partially due to the latter's unexpected decision to stay only one night in Debalo and the fact that this affected his own followers rather than those of Nyikang who had marched through the northern Shilluk. Also, perhaps, because Kur, as son of Fafiti, is popular in the north while he may be less so in the south.

I was not able to attend the final ceremonies. In the account by Mr. Udal [123 184] which follows, it will be seen that *reth* Kur spent only one night up in the mound of *Athurwic*, with the result that the ceremonies of installation from the point where he fled to Debalo had taken only five days instead of the customary nine.

THE FINAL CEREMONIES

(By J. O. Udal)

The Battle for Nyakwer

643 541 The *reth* was anxious to avoid any further delays and decided to spend only one night in *Athurwic*. The battle for *Nyakwer* thus took place on the third day of the installation ceremonies, not on the fourth as is usual. I arrived at about 8 a.m. on the morning of the third day and was able to exchange greetings with the *reth* from a distance although he could not leave *Athurwic: jago* Yorleiker *wad* Ajang thought that the battle would begin very soon, but the inevitable delays followed and it was not until about 9.15 a.m. that Nyikang's drum was heard being beaten in his shrine. The *kwa* Nyikwom began to assemble outside the shrine from which Nyikang and Dak soon emerged and with them *Nyakwer*, dressed in a Mrs. Gray antelope skin. *Nyakwer* is the central figure of the second battle. In the morning, the *reth*, remembering *Nyakwer*, whom he had forsaken for a girl of the *ororo*, sent for her. The news was brought that Nyikang had abducted her and an ultimatum was forthwith sent by the *reth* to Nyikang demanding her immediate return. Both sides then prepared for battle.

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Thus Nyikang emerged from his shrine in an angry mood. The people fell in procession behind the effigies and, dancing and singing, circled the shrine and then set off for the *gol* Onger where the whips of the *kwa* Nyikwom are stored. Both Nyikang and Dak entered this house, and when they came out again a third effigy, that of Cal,[1] was with them. Cal was the brother of Dak and his effigy is made with grey (female) ostrich feathers in contrast to the black feathers of the others. The drum began to beat louder and faster, the singing increased in tempo and all the time the crowds gathered. Simultaneously at the other end of Fashoda, the *reth's* forces were gathering round the mound, the *reth's* police in their scarlet *laus* again conspicuous on the left flank.

There followed a succession of sallies by the assembled forces of Nyikang and the *reth* from opposite ends of the capital. First Nyikang would surge forward and the shield-bearer of the *reth* would conduct the temporary retirement of the *reth's* forces, rattling the bells inside the shield in defiance of Nyikang. Then it would be the turn of the *reth's* followers to advance menacingly and for Nyikang to withdraw in the same manner. Finally a bull was brought forward to be cast on the ground so that the *reth* could step over it before going on to seize *Nyakwer*.[2] Once again the casting was mismanaged and with a disdainful wave of his hand, the *reth* motioned to his retainers to drag the bull out of the way, and swept on to wrest *Nyakwer* from the clutches of Nyikang. Millet stalks began to fly and as the *reth's* party returned to the safety of *Athurwic*, an unsuccessful counter-attack was staged by Nyikang. Its failure was obvious and the drummer then beat the retreat of Nyikang and his men towards the shrine. They did not enter it immediately and although Nyikang had never reached the summit of the mound, he and his followers marched round the shrine and appeared to be about to renew the onslaught. Such forces of the *reth* as remained on the ground seemed to melt away into the host of Nyikang, but somehow the new attack never materialised, despite much drumming and singing, marching and counter-marching for a period of some ten minutes, while the *reth's* guard stood watch on the slopes of *Athurwic*. Nyikang, tired of the proceedings, finally withdrew into his shrine, while Dak, Col and his supporters, perhaps disappointed, gathered outside to sing and dance his praises. The battle for *Nyakwer* had ended.

Speech Day

The sequel of events on this occasion followed former precedents. The *reth* came down from *Athurwic* surrounded by the *ororo* and sat down on the covered stool, while a fan made from one wing of a saddle bill stork was held to shade him. He did not, however, step over a sheep as had happened at previous installations. The chiefs of the country, with the exception of those from the east bank who had been discouraged from attending on account of the epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis there, sat opposite the *reth* on the ground at about twenty-five yards distance.

[1] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 79, Note 21.

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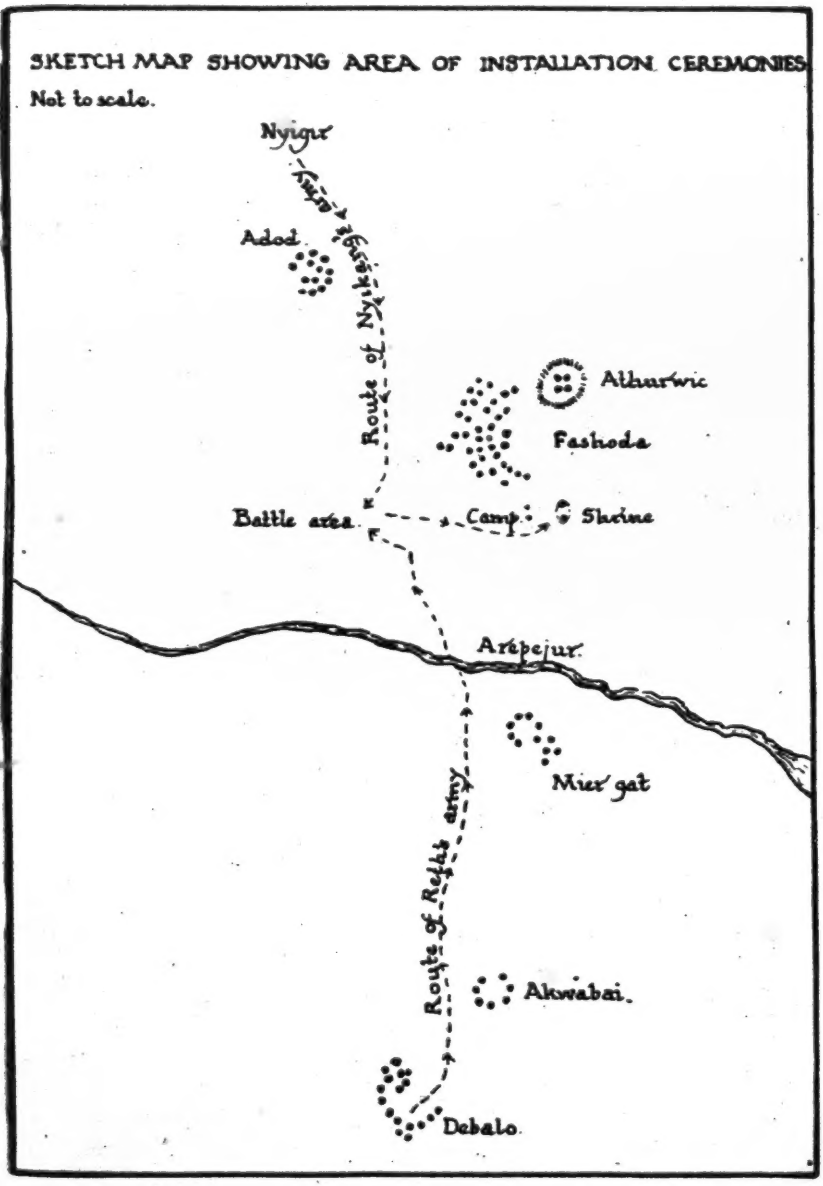
SKETCH MAP SHOWING AREA OF INSTALLATION CEREMONIES

Not to scale.



[FACING p. 200]

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537 643 *Jago* Yorleiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, rose to make the first speech, carrying a spear in his hand. A delay occurred as the *reth's* drummer was missing and had to be found. Then *jago* Yorleiker, followed by *jago* Thabo of Golbainy and titular chief of Gol Dhiang, and other chiefs in order of precedence came forward to address the *reth* on his installation. Nearly all carried presentation spears which were thrust into the ground in front of the *reth*, though one or two, as in the case of *kwanyireth* Akwei Anyong of Detwok, placed a bead on the ground. The speeches were on the whole short, and took the form of exhortations to the *reth* to emulate his father's example and to work closely with the Government; to pay attention to his elder advisers; to visit all the Shilluk lands and to avoid favouritism; to deal fairly with the Shilluk. As each speaker finished he was applauded by the rattling of Nyikang's shield and the beating of the drum, for longer or shorter periods according to the quality, or perhaps, acceptability, of the speech. Those who were most honoured were accompanied back to their place by the shield-bearer before the latter turned to signal out the next speaker. Last of all the chiefs to speak were *jago* Ongwany *wad* Kak and *jago* Kwathi *wad* Kudjok of Tonga, the traditional wardens of the Shilluk Marches at the northern and southern extremities of their country.

Finally the *reth* rose to speak. He walked forward to where rows of spears had been stuck in the ground and there, amid reverent interjections of *wuo* from the assembled Shilluk, he harangued the chiefs for their failure to produce the cattle of the late *reth* which were his just due.[*]

As he spoke he paced backwards and forwards along the lines of spears, evoking grudging grunts of agreement to his apparently rhetorical questions. Having delivered his speech, he stepped back, took hold of the ceremonial sword and made passes over the back of the white bull with a black face which had been tethered on his right. A Shilluk then speared the bull, again with considerable lack of skill, and the *reth* departed on his tour of the royal houses of Fashoda. A slight altercation broke out over who was to have which spears presented by the Chiefs, but the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti, the thirty-second *reth* of the Shilluk, was over.

[*] As explained in a previous article (*S.N. & R.*, Vol. 33, Part 1) the immediate and personal heirs of the late *reth* had attempted to conceal many of the cattle which are royal property and should go to his successor.

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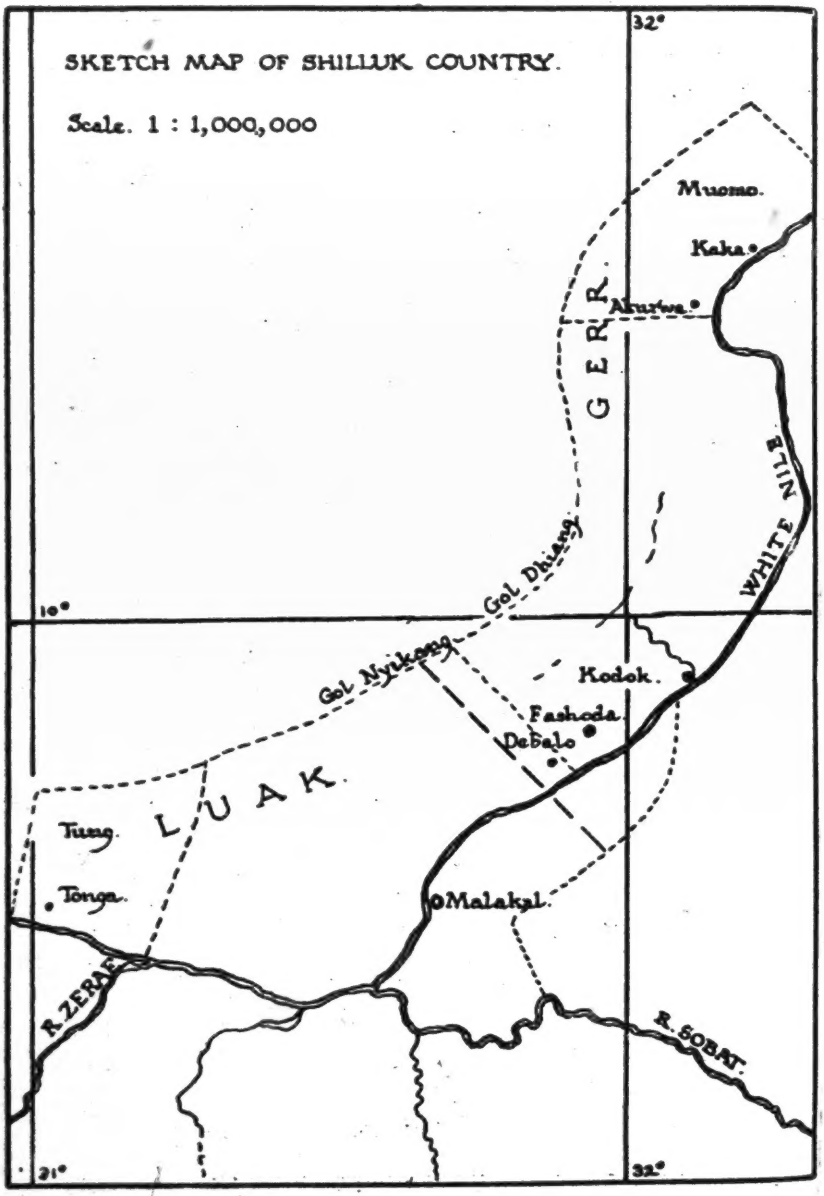

[FACING P. 201]

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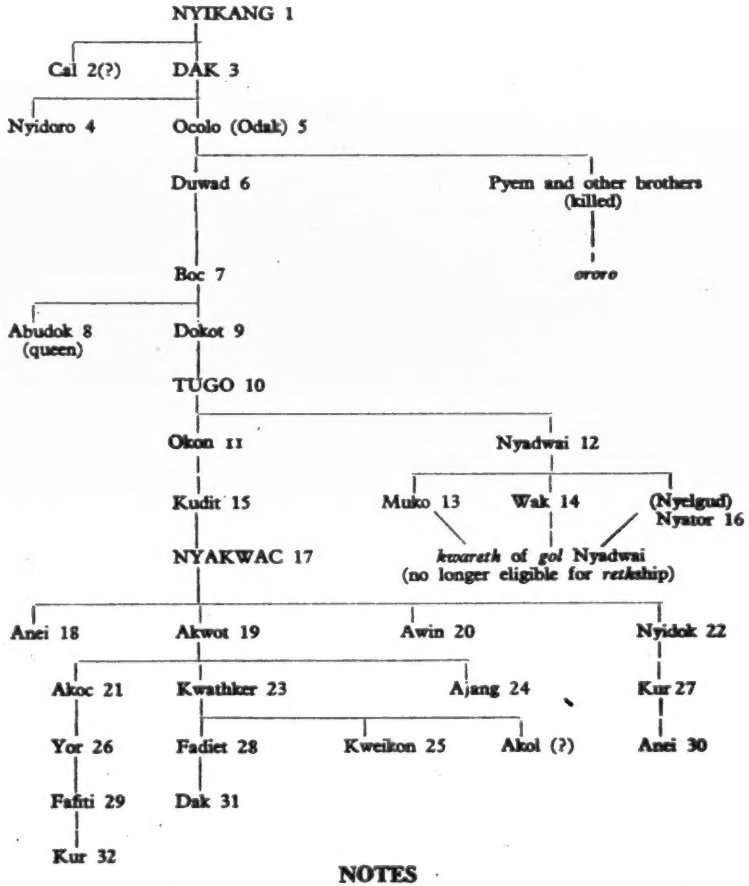
APPENDIX I.
REVISED LIST OF SHILLUK RETHS.



NOTES

173 643 1. Shilluk *reths* prior to Tugo are listed according to tradition, but there are some inconsistencies. Cal, for example, who is said to be a half-brother of Dak, lived at Dinyo near Tonga, but most Shilluk say that he was

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never *reth*. He appears in effigy during the final ceremonies of installation. Nyidoro's position in the genealogy is doubtful; his burial place is unknown, but *reth* Fadiet built a shrine for him. Ocolo is often called Odak, which sometimes leads to confusion with Dak son of Nyikang. Odak's sons, with the exception of Duwad, were killed in battle and their sons were degraded to the status of *ororo*. Pyem is the ancestor of the *kwa* Nyimol the main *ororo* clan. Hofmayr also mentions Akac (son of Duwad or Boc), but he was never *reth*. Abudok, eldest daughter of Boc, is said to have ruled the Shilluk and to have maintained her position by concealing the sex of Dokot, then only a child, who was dressed by her in a girl's apron.

3. Tugo (Hofmayr gives his dates as 1690-1710, but these are, of course, not authenticated) was the first Shilluk *reth* to have a settled capital and founded Fashoda. From him sprang the two main branches of the Royal House, *gol* Okon and *gol* Nyadwai. The latter are still *kwareth* even though no *reth* can now be chosen from their numbers; *reth* Fadiet tried unsuccessfully to degrade them to *ororo*. Some Shilluk mention Ngu Akwo, son of Nyadwai, as being *reth* after Wak, while Nyadwai's brother Ngu Aba never ruled. Nyelgud is a nickname for Nyator who is alleged to have been *reth* after Kudit.

4. All those eligible for the throne are from the House of Okon. Some alterations to previously recorded genealogies should be made. Yor, called Adodit, was son of Akoc, not son of Kwathker. Kweikon, son of Kwathker, should be included; Akol, a rival of Yor and later of Kur, was never installed at Fashoda, though some kind of installation ceremony was held for him by the southern Shilluk at Fanyidwai. Deidunyal, son of Ajang, was elected, but never installed and is not included. In fact many candidates for the throne were backed by only one element in Shilluk society, but failed to get themselves installed and these should not be included.

APPENDIX II.

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